

# Wildlife of the Roof of the World

## The glorious Changtang and delightful Sichuan

October 2<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 2016

### *A Greentours Trip Report*

Led by Jesper Hornskov, Roland Ziedler & Phil Benstead

Daily report by Phil Benstead

#### **Day 1      2<sup>nd</sup> October      flight from home**

Most of the team met up at Heathrow in the afternoon and flew through the night to Chengdu on a nearly empty flight. The remaining two had flown earlier on a different flight. Would we all converge the next day?

#### **Day 2      3<sup>rd</sup> October      more flying, Chengdu and finally Xining**

An interminable but thankfully time-zone truncated day saw us landing in Chengdu, speedily going through immigration, picking up our bags, discovering the shuttle bus to our day-rooms in the nearby airport hotel. Settled into rooms we headed for the hotel restaurant for a much-needed lunch. A comedy affair which saw a fatigued Phil wrestling with his first ever ipad menu ordering system. The food was good though! After a little bit of welcome relaxation in our rooms we continued onwards. Back to the airport and the short-hop to Jesper waiting patiently in Xining to pick us up. A bus whisked us to the hotel and we collapsed.

#### **Day 3      4<sup>th</sup> October      Huzhu area**

We all gathered together at 0530 all wrapped up and ready for any weather, fairly champing at the bit to get at some wildlife. Sadly we were to experience a poor day weatherwise which certainly impacted on the mammal and bird activity and mussed up some of our higher sites. The day was not lost though and we saw some good stuff.

We drove into the Huzhu area about two hours out of town. Dawn broke as we started attacking the route up to the pass and sleety snow started to fall. On the other side of the pass Jesper stopped us to look for Siberian roe deer but the cupboard was bare and we decided to move on to a nearby site for breakfast.

After breakfast we escaped the weather by driving quite a long way downhill and finding an open gate bumped up into the forest a short way. All in the name of acclimatisation/fitness we wandered back down the valley before lunch hoping for a couple of species of pika that Jesper has seen in the past on this track. We were to fail in this quest but after a frustrating start greatly enjoyed the birding on offer. A farm clearing offered up three species of often obliging redstarts and several rufous-breasted accentors. Warblers here hard to find this year with just three Gansu leaf-warblers and a single buff-barred. Chinese nuthatches were often common here and we even saw a few of the recently split Przewalski's this year. Bluetails and a single Chinese thrush eluded many of us. Tits performed well here with grey crested tit and rufous-vented tit being notable. Eventually hunger got the better of us though and we headed back down to the road to find a restaurant for lunch.

After a late lunch we did one more rather steeper track to look for birds and mammals in the spruce forest. Along the track we found things very quiet but we managed a few good things including grey-headed bullfinch and a *japonicus* buzzard. Fortunately Stefan managed to see a marmot here, it was to be our only mammal sighting of the day... Tired we headed down.

Dinner was welcome and then we tackled the checklists before getting a headstart on our packing, another early start in the morning...

## **Day 4          5<sup>th</sup> October          Koko Nor and the South Koko Nor Range**

Another early start saw us checking out and heading out of sleepy Xining well before dawn. Dawn revealed that we were out into decent habitat and climbing up onto the plateau. Jesper called a halt in a sand dune area and we climbed out of the cars to find a fairly mild overcast morning with a bitter breeze and frost in hollows on the ground. The sky above us promised blue later though and the wind dropped nicely during the morning.

From the road we were soon watching the first of a total of 38 Przewalski's gazelles – an incredibly rare and threatened species. A nice adult male was present in the herd and the views though distant were a great start. Walking nearer and into the dunes proved to be a great idea. A passing motorcycle spooked two gazelles that ran in really close and we actually got reasonable photographs! Later we had another contact with the main gazelle herd, which had swollen to over 50 animals, they were easily spooked though and quickly made themselves scarce in the rolling dunes. Amazingly we found two Przewalski's pinktails in the scrub here – a must-see bird for the birders. Also present were brown accentor and some elusive Stolzka's tit-warblers. A nearby small tree held our first Guldentadt's redstart. Woolly hare appeared for the first time here too and Phil kicked up a noisy covey of Daurian partridge on the way back. Lesley had a great day in the field today finding our only Koko Nor toad-headed agama of the trip. A rather disobliging individual that took to its burrow and peeped out occasionally.

Driving further we pushed on to the eastern side of the huge and impressive Koko Nor lake and our first encounter with the seriously cute black-lipped pika, the haughty white-rumped snowfinch and the comical groundpecker. We breakfasted by a freshwater lagoon that was filled with waterfowl.

Black-necked and great crested grebes bobbed about. Big rafts of red-crested pochard contained smaller numbers of dabbling duck. Flying around we found brown-headed gull and whiskered tern. It was hard to concentrate on breakfast with so much to look at. We spent some time here as Jesper had recorded steppe polecat on two occasions in the preceding week. No dice though. Jacqui found a nice immature green toad which was photographed enthusiastically. A Himalayan marmot was seen here, allowing the rest of us to catch up with Stefan.

Eventually though we went for a short walk alongside the nearby marsh. Trawling through the wildfowl produced four ferruginous ducks, some little grebes and we added a number of new waders to our trip-list. Hen harriers hunted out on the marsh but sakers were rather elusive this year. The sun was beating down and the place warmed up quickly. Dragonflies and song-fighting orthopterans were chased by some. The birds continued to entertain and Phil was rather surprised to find a long-billed dowitcher – the first record for Qinghai. We spent a little time photographing this for the record books and then continued on our way.

Driving through the incredible tourist attractions along the lake shore we came across numerous sand dune ATV concessions, fields full of flowers and gambolling Chinese armed with selfie-sticks, immaculately groomed white yaks offered photo opportunities. We took lunch in a roadside restaurant, the roads still quite busy with bank holiday traffic. Taking the road over the South Koko Nor Range we stopped briefly on the climb for a comfort stop and had our first Himalayan griffon vultures and twite before Jesper led us to a fascinating area pock-marked by the activities of thousands of black-lipped pikas. The area was huge and it was rather hard to take in its scale and the sheer number of pikas that made the area its home. Everywhere you looked the pikas were basking in the afternoon sun. Unsurprisingly this great bounty was a huge magnet for predators and we found our first Tibetan foxes here and enjoyed watching them scent-marking and catching pikas. This is a really attractive and charismatic dog. Sakers and upland buzzards proved elusive and distant this year. White-rumped and rufous-necked snowfinch were much more obliging and we had a close encounter with a woolly hare that sat beautifully for photos. As the temperature dropped towards dusk we headed back to the cars and the short drive to the hotel in Gong He.

## **Day 5          6<sup>th</sup> October          Gansu Gully and the Er La Pass**

A pre-dawn start saw us heading for the Er La pass. A red fox appeared in the headlights at one point. En route we tried a dirt road side track into great mountain habitat. Here we searched all morning for Pallas's cat but failed to find any in the overcast conditions. Light rain and snow fell in thankfully brief flurries. Despite the lack of cats we had a fairly lively session. A Tibetan fox put in an appearance before breakfast and we started to familiarise ourselves with a few new birds. Eastern great rosefinch put in an appearance first.

After searching the area we went for a short walk down to the river to look for Gansu pika. Here we had incredible views of two adult lammergiars that flew in to land above us on a cliff. A high-flying wallcreeper was a bonus. As the morning warmed up birds became more obvious and we did well as we scoured the sides of the gullies for the tiny pika. Jesper eventually found us one very obliging pika

but not before we had all seen robin accentor and Tibetan snowfinch. Towards the end of the session the sun came out and we redoubled our efforts scanning all the crags and ridges for cats but to no avail, we simply added to our growing fox and marmot tally. As we walked back we bumped into a glorious male Caucasian great rosefinch.

We took lunch in a nearby town and afterwards we drove on to the Er La Pass (4499 metres and our highest point to date). Here we slowly walked up to a saddle and then dropped a little way down to enjoy views into a rather beautiful mountain landscape. Again we searched high and low for the cat but just found other species. Overhead we enjoyed great views of lammergier, saker and golden eagle. Down below us we found out first Henri's snowfinch and when we found a large Blyth's mountain vole colony we sacrificed yet more vertical height by dropping down to them for photos. Jesper spotted our first Tibetan gazelles in the far distance. Walking back to the cars we headed for the nearby village of Wenquan and sorted ourselves out into our basic lodgings for the night.

## **Day 6          7<sup>th</sup> October          Wenquan Pass and the river at Wenquan**

Having failed to see Pallas's cat yesterday we left the hotel at 0630 to tackle a high-altitude walk at the Wenquan Pass. Arriving at dawn we set up the breakfast and started scanning. Almost immediately Phil spotted some suspicious furballs on a nearby ridge. Three Pallas's cat youngsters! Result! When we had all enjoyed some 'scope views we chucked down some breakfast, filled our pockets with lunch and set about stalking the kittens. I do not think any of us really imagined we would end up all sitting just metres from these adorably grumpy-looking little cats. I wonder how many images we took between us? Surely we have some of the best pictures of this in the world on our memory cards? It was an amazing thing.

Eventually half the team peeled off to do the planned walk, whilst the rest understandably spent the day with the kittens. The hiking team got the bit between their teeth and trudged off on a decent mountain walk. The scenery was stunning and the sun blazed down. Migrants through the pass today included a Pallas's gull, a single long-legged buzzard and a speedy hobby. Walking steadily we stopped at suitable vantage points to search the huge amount of habitat available to us for snow leopard and other goodies on the surrounding hills. In the end we had to settle for smaller fare. Those that got to the end of the walk managed to find Tibetan dwarf hamster, as well as nine Brandt's mountain finch. Meanwhile Phil and Stefan who settled for three-quarters of the walk were entertained by a hyperactive mountain weasel. Well worth the effort! Trudging back we finally met up with team Cat and headed back down to the village in the vehicles.

With a little time in hand before dinner we split in two again. One team went to document the religious area on the other side of the village and the other went down to the river with Jesper for some birding. The bird team had a nice little walk with plenty of highlights. Two Chinese pond-herons and a black-crowned night-heron were a surprise. Less surprising but equally welcome were a single solitary snipe, a white wagtail and at least four citrine wagtails. Perhaps the most surprising bird though was Lesley's Eurasian wigeon, behaving more like a torrent duck in the stream! As we

walked back Jesper spotted a nice Tibetan fox. Getting back just in time for dinner, we ate, checklisted and collapsed in a heap.

## **Day 7          8<sup>th</sup> October          Huashixia**

We got a lie-in this morning, leaving at 0600 and heading over the pass again en route to the scrubby dunes at Huashixia. Mammals dominated proceedings as we stopped to photograph our first close Tibetan gazelles and kiang.

Another hour down the road and we arrived at this exciting site, low dunes covered in willow scrub that hosts the fabled Przvalski's pinktail – all on its own in a monotypic family! If you have an interest in birds it does not get more exciting than this.

After breakfast we tramped off towards the habitat across the pika warrens bursting with industrious pikas. On the edge of the scrub we re-grouped and had a briefing. Almost immediately we found our first Gansu pika, one of three during the morning session. Stefan dug out a zokor mound and was rewarded with a fleeting glimpse of one as it came back to repair the damage!

Birdwise things were rather quiet, no doubt due to the rather warmer weather than usual here at this time of year. The pinktail surrendered quickly after we entered the dunes – a simply superb little bird. We found about five during the session and the supporting cast included a few robin accentors, plenty of Stoliczka's tit-warbler, white-browed tit and some Guldenstadt's and blue-fronted redstarts. The easy highlight of the session here though was the lengthy encounter we had with a mountain weasel.

After a superb yak soup lunch in a nearby restaurant we drove a short distance to an area where the team pursued photographs of kiang by indulging in a bit of off-roading. We walked out later to a low mound by the road to scan for mammals. Kiang and gazelle were present here. Our last stops of the day were along a river valley studded with wetlands. The first stop netted nearly 250 kiang and our first black-necked cranes. The second by a large river had plenty of birds including another pair of cranes and a nice selection of gulls.

## **Day 8          9<sup>th</sup> October          Bayankala pass and south to Yushu**

Although comfortable, our hotel in Maduo was a little too high (4300m asl) for a complete night's sleep sadly (unless you were David...). So rather bleary-eyed we assembled for the day's drive south to Yushu and once David had appeared we set off! Most of us missed the first bridge over the Yellow River just outside town but cross it we did. The day dawned overcast and we were to be dogged by sporadic rain and snow during the day.

En route to the Bayankala pass (4824m asl) we passed yet more kiang and gazelles and marvelled at the density of upland buzzards in this neck of the woods. At the pass we set about breakfast but it quickly became apparent that Lesley was suffering with AMS and we quickly hooked her up to some

oxygen, rearranged cars and luggage and Phil then took her in one of the vehicles to lower altitude to provide immediate relief from the symptoms.

Meanwhile the pass team spent some time searching the scree patches for dwarf hamsters without success sadly. They had great views of a red fox hunting pika though. It was hard work in the snow and eventually they headed down to Qingshuihe for a late noodle lunch in a restaurant.

The downhill team stopped briefly in the falling snow at the Xiewu pass before dropping off the plateau. The drive down off the plateau took us down to trees and buckthorn scrub a stark and very colourful contrast with the plateau. We stopped briefly to look for ibisbill and succeeded in photographing one of a couple seen and also had our first dipper and Godlewski's bunting. Eventually we hit Yushu for a late lunch and heavy rain meant we had the remainder of the afternoon free to relax.

Meanwhile the uphill team were also affected by snow at the Xiewu pass and came away empty-handed and the heavy rain on the way down the hill discouraged any outdoor activity.

## **Day 9      10<sup>th</sup> October      south of Yushu to Nangqian**

Another early start saw us checking out of the hotel in Yushu in the rain and heading south down the road to Nangqian. Climbing the pass in slushy snow we dropped down into the catchment of the Mekong and a nice limestone landscape that captivated us throughout the day. Rain hammered down but luckily when we arrived on site the sun burst out. Near the start of the walk we stopped to admire a number of passerine birds occupying a weedy field, which included our first Siberian stonechat.

Breakfast was consumed by the suspension bridge at the start of a walk that took us through a charming valley, past a small hamlet and into a small gorge. This took the best part of the day. We succeeded in our aim of finding some *mcneilli* red deer pretty quickly, when Staffan spotted a group of six hinds and calves feeding on a close-by ridge. We also provided much entertainment to the local people as we journeyed through the valley.

Marmots were rather easily found here and we got some good photographs. Two flocks of white eared-pheasants were most welcome. This robust pheasant is quite a treat. Tibetan partridges were harder to find this year, Staffan finding a covey high on the slopes whilst chasing marmots. Pretty Glover's pika scampered amongst the buildings and walls of the hamlet. The farmyards here were full of accentors. The small stream produced our white-bellied dipper and the nearby scrub our first good looks at Elliot's laughingthrush, Sichuan tit, Sichuan and alpine leaf warbler. A tiring day but worth it for the scenery alone.

Driving to Nangqian we stopped just once to check out a huge group of Tibetan partridge that were crossing the road. Our first pink-rumped rosefinches appeared here too. Arriving in town at dusk we settled into our quirky hotel for the luxury of a two-night stay and some much needed laundry!

**Day 10****11<sup>th</sup> October****Baixha Forest Reserve**

Another early start had us out the door well before dawn for the drive down to the Baixha Forest reserve. It had obviously rained heavily overnight but we got away with it during the day. On the dirt track to the gate Anita found her 700<sup>th</sup> mammal herself when she spotted the first of two fine white-lipped deer stags. Arriving at the gate we delivered a fruit-basket to the forest guards who let us in. Driving into the heart of the reserve we eventually pulled up for breakfast before commencing a downhill hike that lasted until lunch. It was a beautiful walk memorable for producing a number of new birds and a few mammals. We searched the open areas on the slopes above us for mammals as we followed the river downstream and picked up a few blue sheep feeding high above us.

Birding was good with special mention going to the crested tit-warbler Jesper found us – what a bird! Giant laughingthrush was relatively common and we also found a few Chinese fulvettas. Abundant rufous-vented tit flocks included a few special birds like Hodgson's treecreeper and white-throated redstart. Drifting down the valley Phil spotted a tiny moupin pika, but it failed to reappear from its burrow when we all gathered around. A few Sichuan leaf-warblers appeared in riverside willows. Lesley found a pair of red crossbill. A last uphill walk before we left produced two Glover's pika but no more moupin pika. Would we see one in the morning? On the way out we stopped a few times picking up some very white white eared-pheasants.

**Day 11****12<sup>th</sup> October****The Kanda Shan**

Today we once again headed south of Nangqian in the dark retracing part of yesterday's route before diving off towards the unbelievably beautiful Kanda Shan. Unfortunately it was snowing for most of the session here and this hindered our search for alpine musk-deer and other wildlife. Conditions made birding difficult too but we had great views of a flock of Szecheny's monal-partridge and three blood pheasants. Glover's pika put on a show here scampering up sheer rock faces.

After breakfast we pulled out of the mountains as the weather remained awful and looked very settled. We drove north hoping to get clear of the weather but eventually made it back to Yushu without much change. One memorable stop en route netted a large feeding flock of 1500+ hill pigeons, with attendant Oriental skylarks. Phil's van picked up a couple of ibisbill near town. Arriving back in Yushu we stopped briefly at the earthquake memorial and then checked in to the hotel before a reduced squad headed the short distance north to check out another ibisbill location the one that proved so fruitful the other day. We had a great little session here with at least five ibisbill, two green sandpiper and another solitary snipe. White-throated dippers were present in small numbers too and included a nice brown morph individual. A nice end to the day.

**Day 12****13<sup>th</sup> October****drive to Qumalai**

Another travel day interspersed with stops at likely-looking spots and known mammal locations. Wet snow continued to be a feature of the weather in the morning and we and other road-users had to

concentrate climbing the highest pass outside Yushu. We climbed the first of two high passes through rolling hills and plenty of evidence of over-grazing. Dropping down we came to a superb valley wetland (Longbaotan). We stopped twice along the northern shore, tallying at least 9 black-necked cranes and finding big flocks of ferruginous ducks and common teal. The best bird here though was a juvenile Pallas's fish-eagle.

As the day progressed we trundled along the now tarmac road and stopped occasionally to look at a roadside Tibetan fox. Jesper found a spot with a good number of white-lipped deer. Herds including many fine stags in full rut. The last stop before lunch was notable for raptors with fine flyby views of steppe eagle and lammergier. Lunch was taken in bustling Zhiduo, here we quickly became a star attraction and nearly stopped traffic! Leaving Zhiduo we were stopped by the police who wanted to see our travel permits and just afterwards a comfort stop produced distant views of our first argali. They were in the hills on our direction of travel so we motored nearer. The next hour netted over 50 argali and ended with Mr Pang finding us some close roadside males that begged to be photographed.

Our last stop of the day was by two bridges spanning the Yangtze. Here in the riverbed we found eastern great rosetfinch, more Guldenstadt's redstarts and a surprise pine bunting. A stag and hind white-lipped deer here were to be our last.

## **Day 13      14<sup>th</sup> October      drive to Budonquan**

A nice late 0700 start saw us on the road out of Qumalai. The new tarmac road was to be our constant companion as we drove yet again through some staggeringly desolate scenery on our way to the truck stop at Budonquan. Throughout the day we stayed mostly above 4200m asl.

Our morning drive was punctuated by numerous stops. Just outside Qumalai we noted but did not stop for the captive white-lipped deer (bred for powdered antler products...). Later we saw four stags on a distant hillside. We definitely all stopped for our first wolf that seemed to be tracking three Tibetan foxes. Two of the foxes fled in panic, but one stayed for a long look before it too made itself scarce. This wolf was the first of nine during the day incredibly, easily our best day-total on the tour. As we drove on we enjoyed excellent but fleeting views of sakers, steppe eagles and the first of a huge number of Tibetan gazelles logged during the day. We stopped occasionally until we were all happy with our gazelle photographs.

Reaching the Chang Tang the landscape opened out considerably and we started to search for antelope. We did not have to wait too long for our first chiru (or Tibetan antelope) but the animals were very distant and we elected to move on in search of others. Out on the flats we found large numbers of kiang, loads of Tibetan gazelles and yet more (mostly female) chiru. A huge male wild yak made an appearance and was much photographed. Finding a small group of male chiru we elected to walk out to them for photographs but they were spooked by wolf number 9 and we just watched them disappear into the distance...



Close female chiru and kiang appeared by the roadside as we approached Budonquan. We still had some light in the day though so we headed up the Lhasa road to a wildlife lookout. Here we finally got to grips with some great scope views of male chiru. Although the bitterly cold wind meant that many spent their time here in the vehicles. As dusk fell we checked into our colourful truck-stop accommodation.

## **Day 14      15<sup>th</sup> October      to Golmud via Yeniugou**

Another early start saw us out the door of our simple accommodation and into the cars for the ride downhill to the start of the dirt track up Yeniugou (literally Wild Yak valley). It was an awfully corrugated dirt road and we bounced along at speed. Stops on the way in produced some distant argali, and plenty of kiang and gazelle. Wild yak dotted the beautiful slopes.

A breakfast stop about 40 km along the track provided another small herd of argali. A small flock of Tibetan sandgrouse flew past at range at one point. After breakfast we walked along the river searching the scrub for voles. Hares spooked in front of us and a few passerines were spotted including Chinese grey shrike. Driving out we stopped just once and saw a flock of 21 Mongolian finches.

Valley done we drove on to Golmud, through an increasingly arid, desert landscape. A coffee/snack stop by a small woodland was exciting for the birders in the team. A good fall was evident with some exciting migrants on the ground including olive-backed pipit, Siberian chiffchaff, little bunting and two blue-and-white flycatchers. Eric found a siskin and brambling was present here too. A dead scaly thrush was the best record here though. As we neared Golmud we sensed the edge of the great Qaidam Basin, our hunting ground in the morning for a new suite of mammals and birds.

## **Day 15      16<sup>th</sup> October      to Dulan, via the Qaidam and Nuomohong**

The road out of Golmud was mostly an arrow-straight good paved road that led us through some exciting desert and mountain scenery sadly viewed through a forest of pylons. Our breakfast stop produced our first views of a very small number of goitered gazelles and over breakfast we watched them drift off into the taller vegetation.

After breakfast we did a long, hot and dusty circuit through the rather strange Qaidam Basin habitat. Bearded tits called all around us and we were treated to superb views of this familiar species. Tarim hill babbler proved to be elusive this year. Other notable birds included fly-over Asian short-toed lark, the thick-billed race of reed bunting and common pheasant. Goitered gazelles occasionally popped up but we could only find traces of midday gerbils.

Lunch was taken at a nearby truckstop (Mongolian dumplings!) and then we cracked on to Dulan. Numerous stops occurred inevitably and one was for a roadside pair of Henderson's ground jay – in the background at least four goitered gazelle showed in the shimmer of the heat haze (the temperature today peaking at a dizzying 16 degrees C). We eventually reached Dulan in time for a

very quick walk around the woods behind the town. This produced very few birds this year. Jesper saw our first fleeting Przewalski's redstart (disappointing) and more of us saw the woodcock flushed by the vanguard. Dusk fell far too quickly and as the temperature plummeted we headed back to our pick-up spot and the hotel. Dinner was a particularly sumptuous affair this evening.

## **Day 16      17<sup>th</sup> October      Dulan Mountains and the Chaka desert**

A 0700 start saw us heading down the road towards the Dulan Mountains. Climbing up we headed off the road and up to the start of what was to be a rather strenuous 5-hour walk. Whilst breakfasting at the trailhead, Jesper located the first of four *kansuensis* red deer, these were to be the only individuals we were to see today. Birds were in very short supply too here this year and little troubled us during our meal.

We headed off eventually, walking up, we searched a rocky gully really hard hoping for a Chinese red pika but nothing was afoot. Perhaps the huge Eurasian eagle owl that flew down the gully had something to do with it? Phil spotted a distant active pika (Glover's?) and we headed up a ridge to view the crag it was on. En route we bagged a small herd of blue sheep. The sun blazed down throughout and we watched dust devils swirling across the plain below us. The scenery was some of the best we had seen so far on the tour.

On the ridge we lunched and patiently searched the nearby rock face for pikas that sadly never materialised. A very close Himalayan griffon vulture appeared above us though and a few close lammergiere were a treat. Dropping down we stopped again to search the pika rock face and we were splendidly distracted by our only flock of Przewalski's partridge. So ended our sojourn in the Dulan Mountains this year.

Motoring on to Chaka we stopped a few times. Our first stop to search for gazelles was fruitless. Much more fun was had in the desert west of Chaka where we stopped to search great habitat for midday gerbil. We found plenty of evidence of their presence and several burrows had very active individuals. Getting good photos was a challenge though, as they favoured sandy hillocks covered in thorny scrub, but we all got views. Occasional gerbils ran regular fast runs between food sources and their burrows. A nice way to end a tiring day.

## **Day 17      18<sup>th</sup> October      Chaka desert, gulag and to Xining**

Our last morning of the Tibetan leg of the journey dawned and found us breakfasting in the grassland surrounding the lake outside Chaka. On arrival we were greeted by a small flock of six Pallas's sandgrouse which was an excellent way to start the day. A stretch out across the grassland after breakfast netted many more encounters with this fascinating species. Our regular spring-fed stream was great for birds as usual and we all caught up with Mongolian finch and water pipit here and were treated to brief visits by our two missing snowfinch species; Blanford's and Pere David's.

Relocating we moved the short distance to Chaka gulag and here we quickly found Chinese pied woodpecker and had had a delightful encounter with a flock of four Prszwalski's redstarts and even a single Pallas's leaf warbler. One last stop hit the jackpot with two red-billed starlings and a White's thrush (Jesper only). Lunch was taken very nearby and that just left the not-so-expressway road trip into Xining, which produced a single black vulture. We said our heartfelt thanks to our drivers on arrival in Xining and waved them off. Our final meal of the Qinghai leg saw us thanking Jesper for his hard work and organisation of a great tour. Sichuan beckoned and this time Jesper would be coming with us!

## **Day 18      19<sup>th</sup> October      to Sichuan and Laba He**

Breakfast in the hotel was a novelty affair and then Jesper was amongst us for his last official act, getting us on board the bus that whisked us to the airport in good time to meet all requirements. As usual batteries posed a conundrum, hold or hand luggage? At the airport we realised that Jesper was on a different flight but leaving at the same time... We all met up though at the other end, Roland expertly fielding Jesper from a different terminal and the recently-arrived Maureen shepherding us to the waiting bus.

After lunch we then undertook the long drive to Laba He with little wildlife to trouble us but plenty to look at otherwise.

## **Day 19      20<sup>th</sup> October      Laba He**

A leisurely start saw us breakfasting in the hotel. Driving up hill we stopped by the bins for our first Tibetan macaques before heading up the new road to the best spot for red panda. The new road has carved through the site and its ongoing work created not a little disturbance during our stay. The panda site was much as we left it three years ago. The red deer enclosure had already failed and the deer milled about. Plenty of fruiting trees here though and it took just 20 minutes to find our first red panda, when Phil spotted one sleeping in a nearby tree.

The photographers whirred into action. The animal woke up eventually and we pulled back to allow it to descend eventually and it crossed to a nearby fruiting tree to feed. Eventually we left it in peace and tackled the nearby loop walk up the hillside. The highlight of this walk came quickly in the form of a phantom flock of maroon-backed accentors that flitted about us in the dense tangle. Walking higher we searched flocks of fulvetta for other species and found black-faced laughingthrushes. Small ponds showed signs of the emergence of a good-sized aeshnid and later we found an egg-laying female *Aeshna juncea mongolica*. The panda greeted us when we had finished our walk and we set about taking more photographs.

We took lunch at the car park and then walked downhill, enjoying the splendid mountain scenery on a rare blue-sky day in Sichuan. After dinner we went for a night-drive along the access road. This was rather quiet until we came across a cliff-face mineral lick that had attracted four huge red-and-white

giant flying-squirrel, a single tiny complex-toothed flying-squirrel and a goral. Also during the drive a Reeve's muntjac.

## **Day 20      21<sup>st</sup> October      Laba He**

This morning we took breakfast in the field just below cable car mayhem at the top of the road. Afterwards we took a fairly uneventful stroll downhill but for a few birds and some nice flowering rhododendrons. Birds included black-faced laughingthrush and grey-sided and yellow-bellied bush-warbler. Eventually we had a snack and bussed down to the red panda area for our daily fix. Roland found us an obliging one after another gave us the slip and we got yet more photographs. It was asleep when we found it but woke up and then walked off across a small gully – a lovely sighting.

Eventually we returned for lunch at the hotel and then the choice offered by a mixed programme. Some went back up the hill after pandas with Phil and others went out with Roland to explore pastures new.

Phil's team spotted a red panda as they alighted from the bus but it only lasted three minutes in the 'scope before making itself scarce. That left two hours to admire the autumn colours and look for another one! We could not find one in the end but were entertained by the recently escaped red deer including a randy stag, a nice flock that included a few scarce Pere David's tit and a coterie of Chinese women that took a fancy to Staffan. Team Roland probably had a quieter time down the ranger station trail...

The evening spotlighting session up the road produced at least two red-and-white giant flying squirrels and some deer.

## **Day 21      22<sup>nd</sup> October      Laba He**

We woke to morning rain, drizzle and low cloud. Eventually we settled down to a wet breakfast at a 'scenic lookout'. Driving down to the waterfall we walked up the old boardwalk. Those who made it to the end were rewarded with a brief red panda, a large flock of speckled wood pigeon, more Pere David's tit and a dark-breasted rosefinch.

After an early lunch we split again, some going panda-hunting and others going with Roland for birds.

## **Day 22      23<sup>rd</sup> October      Laba He to Dujiangyan**

Some of us elected to head back up to the panda hotspot but the road team were already in place and creating a lot of disturbance (on a Sunday before 8 o'clock!). We unsurprisingly failed to find any pandas and in the end walked away from the area. A few bird flocks appeared in more peaceful corners of the forest and we saw our first crimson-breasted woodpecker, Perny's long-nosed squirrel

and nearly saw a flock of noisy fulvous parrotbills. Very quiet birding this year in Laba He but at least we had seen the red panda very well on the first day.

Leaving the park we dropped back down past the big landslip and successfully negotiated the various bottle-necks. The journey must have been dull and unexciting as I can recall very little of it. Birds out of the window included a few egrets and our first crested mynas.

Checking in at dusk we were soon en route to a bustling hotpot restaurant where we cooked items of choice in a seething pot of broth set into the table in front of us. Colourful, sociable and tasty too. The real natural history highlight of the day was restricted to a post-dinner walk through the parks and woodlands on the slopes above the hotel. Here we chased a collared scops-owl until it eventually sat up close-by in a bush. We also briefly heard Northern boobook too but could not find it. A large moribund viper in the gutter was a sobering but unexpected and exciting find (species?). Night-herons called from some unseen wetland. Tired and exercised we returned to the hotel.

## **Day 23      24<sup>th</sup> October      transfer to Tangjiahe**

Phil and Roland went out the door early with Staffan and the French team. We breakfasted in a small eatery and then headed for the bustling bus station and their airport bus. Predictably their seats on the bus had been taken but they found seats at the back and hopefully survived the hour-long journey to the airport at Chengdu and their flight home... Shopping next, Phil and Roland stocked up on a few necessities and bought a durian for Stefan.

Back at the hotel we loaded up the bags, tried to hide the durian from the driver and set off. The durian was rather obvious throughout the journey however... We stopped for lunch in a small town and shopped for tea etc in a nearby small supermarket. Leaving the motorway behind us we started climbing into an increasingly attractive rural landscape. Roadside rivers produced glimpses of our first crested kingfishers. A reservoir produced drive-by little grebe and spot-billed duck. At one point Jesper spotted a group of collared crows and these landed in some fruiting trees in the sun for great photographs.

The durian was getting mouthwateringly obvious by mid-afternoon so we stopped for a coffee/tea in a small roadside restaurant owned by a fantastically theatrical Madam. She happily gave us the knives necessary to get inside the durian and hot water for our coffee and tea during a short stop aimed at tasting this amazing tropical fruit. Finally a quick stop in a pass near the park indicated that birds were present but we were running out of time and so vowed to return on the final day of the tour en route to Chengdu.

Dusk fell as we offered our passports at the entrance gate. The security light here had pulled in some good moths the previous night and some of us snapped away with our cameras whilst we waited for officialdom. We drove up to the hotel without spotlighting but a bus in front of us disturbed a serow that some of us saw. Checking in, we headed for our rooms in the garden and then straight to dinner. A long day in the bus but we had arrived.

Our first and much-anticipated Tangjiahe spotlighting session was rather quiet at the start, probably because for once we were competing with some Chinese teams that were disturbing things a bit. We outlasted them though and then things started to get interesting. Takin is a huge attraction and one of the reasons to come to this park and we did not have to wait too long before we were enjoying our first individuals on open slopes above the road. This is a hugely impressive mammal. We got some great close views of adults and youngsters during the drive. Serow eluded us again but we got great views of the more obliging goral. Hog badger was a huge favourite and the palm civet was present in small numbers but elusive as usual. A good first session.

## **Day 24      25<sup>th</sup> October      Tangjiahe (Motainling trail)**

Our first full day in the field arrived, morning rain and overcast was the order of day (as usual in Sichuan...). We took the bus down to the bus-stop for the park bus uphill to the start of the taxing Motainling trail. This was our big chance to get in amongst some of the pheasants found in the mountains here but although we walked up high into the mossy forest we could only hear distant tragopans and the golden pheasants heard failed to materialise from the deep bamboo thickets. Birds did appear here though and most got their best views of the attractive black-faced laughingthrush and little fork-tail entertained along the small streams. A mammal appeared for the group in the shape of an excellent encounter with a tufted deer the easy highlight of a rather quiet session. Delayed by the dearth of pheasants we dropped back downhill to the waiting buses and a late lunch.

After lunch we took another bus up the autumn leaf route. Most of us bailed out early to search the road in peace but some continued upwards to look at the autumnal scene. The road proved to be rather quiet as we searched for snub-nosed monkeys. Re-united briefly on the last bus, some bailed out again 5 km from the hotel and walked back home. Still no snub-nosed monkeys along the road but we eventually found a single male Tibetan macaque... Dusk fell as we tramped along and we got back just in time for dinner. Would we see the monkey tomorrow?

The evening spotlighting session saw us sneaking up 'leaf' road for a short drive up to the ranger station. The rangers were not exactly pleased to have their peace disturbed but it was a great two-hour drive. The highlights included a lovely close but all too brief Chinese serow over the road in front of the bus and Roland found us a pair of rather carefully mating porcupines. Eye-watering stuff. The porcupines understandably resented our intrusion and made themselves scarce but we found a more obliging one near the hotel that fed unconcerned by the spotlight on the other side of the river. Other species noted included the usual goral, muntjac and Jacqui found us a nice rodent (*Niviventer?*).

## **Day 25      26<sup>th</sup> October      Tangjiahe**

Operation golden snub-nosed monkey commenced after breakfast and we dawdled through the hotel clearing scanning the slopes above us with bins and 'scopes. After half-an-hour Anita scored big with a troupe crossing a gully and thrashing about in the trees. Distant views for sure but any view of this elusive species is to be treasured. We watched for about five minutes as the monkeys crossed the

gully and then they must have gone back to ground level for we could find no further trace. We were pleased with the encounter though!

We gave chase up a convenient trail but predictably we started getting distracted by birds and by the time we reached the high-point of the trail (very near where the monkeys had crossed the gully) we were too late to re-connect. One good flock of birds by the river here produced great views of slaty bunting and brown-flanked bush-warbler. At the apogee of the trail a small team selected to walk higher with Roland whilst the rest went down (picking up a nice buck Reeve's muntjac) and a rest up before lunch. Roland's team returned at lunch to report a fine close encounter with the skittish troupe on the slopes above the trail. Nice one!

In the afternoon we went for a nice walk down the road, following the river and enjoying the amazing scenery and a few birds. Our search for tawny fish-owl was eventually to be fruitless but we found some nice Pere David's rock squirrels along the way and got closer to some crested kingfishers.

The long night drive after dinner was rather quiet and cold, we did see some glorious feeding porcupines by the river above the hotel and then a few good things below it, including only our second hog badger of the tour.

## **Day 26      27<sup>th</sup> October      Tangjiahe and transfer to Chengdu**

Some of us did a speedy ascent of the Spirit Monkey Trail after breakfast. We saw little. Jesper meanwhile tried to find the snub-nosed monkeys above the hotel but had to settle for a wild boar. That left the journey to Chengdu. This was rather wildlife-free as we suffered our only puncture of the tour that delayed us by two hours. This allowed lunch and an exploration of a small town that produced our only peregrine of the trip and a few house sparrows.

Mid-afternoon saw us at the riverside comfort stop we always stop at. Starlings milled around. The river had a few waders including a nice long-billed plover and then we were off again into the bustle of Chengdu and a great last dinner in town with Roland.

## **Day 27      28<sup>th</sup> October      Chengdu and flight home**

The hotel breakfast under our belt, we were whisked to the airport in our bus and entered the travel machine. An incredible tour with so many photographic opportunities.

## Systematic List Number 1      Mammals

Order and nomenclature follow Smith & Xie (2008) *A guide to the mammals of China*. Species in square brackets [] were recorded by sign only.

Tibetan macaque	<i>Macaca thibetana</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers at Laba He and Tangjiahe around the hotel complexes and even in the woods occasionally.
Golden snub-nosed monkey	<i>Rhinopithecus roxellana</i>	'Scope views of a large troupe on the slopes above the hotel at Tangjiahe on the second morning for most of us. Roland and a small Swedish team walked high above the loop trail for a brief close encounter with them.
Red-and-white giant flying squirrel	<i>Petaurista alborufus</i>	Four individuals of this huge species on the vertical salt-lick at Laba He on our first night session. Two more the next night elsewhere at Laba He.
Complex-toothed flying squirrel	<i>Troglodytes xanthipes</i>	One on the vertical salt-lick with the above species at Laba He.
Swinhoe's striped squirrel	<i>Tamias swinhoi</i>	Only in Sichuan. Singles daily at Laba He. A few at Tangjiahe.
Père David's rock squirrel	<i>Sciurotamias davidianus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few daily at Tangjiahe.
Perny's long-nosed squirrel	<i>Dremomys pernyi</i>	At least one confirmed sighting at Tangjiahe. Possibly also at Laba He.
Himalayan marmot	<i>Marmota himalayana</i>	Stefan bagged one at HuZhu. Small numbers thereafter in the unseasonably warm weather on a huge five further days on the Tibetan leg of the tour.
Malayan porcupine	<i>Hystrix brachyura</i>	Quills found at Laba He. Two very together at Tangjiahe on the first night resented our intrusion into their privacy. Another feeding animal later that night was well-behaved. Two the next night fed unconcernedly across the river giving superb views.
Chinese zokor	<i>Eospalax fontanierii</i>	Only Stefan had the patience and skill to excavate a zokor mound at Huashixia and wait for the animal to effect repairs. Sign noted elsewhere.
Brown rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	One in Chengdu for Eric and Lesley.
Niviventer sp	<i>Niviventer sp.</i>	Tangjiahe (1 at night was well-photographed and may well be identified retrospectively).
Blyth's mountain vole	<i>Phaiomys leucurus</i>	All the diurnal, colonial voles noted at high altitude were assigned to this species (four dates).
Tibetan dwarf hamster	<i>Cricetulus tibetanus</i>	One high above the Wenquan Pass.
Midday gerbil	<i>Meriones meridionalis</i>	We had an excellent late afternoon session with this species in the desert west of Chaka, all of us saw this species and most of us got photographs. At least ten individuals involved. Good to find a reliable site again after all the roadwork disruption of the last few years.
South China field mouse	<i>Apodemus draco</i>	Recorded at Tangjiahe.
Moupin pika	<i>Ochotona thibetana</i>	Phil had a brief glimpse at Baixha – our only record.



Black-lipped pika	<i>Ochotona curzoniae</i>	First seen around the edge of Koko Nor and frequently encountered thereafter (on some days we must have seen thousands).
Glover's pika	<i>Ochotona gloveri</i>	A few encountered on the three days south of Yushu. Possibly this species glimpsed by Phil in the Dulan Mountains but Chinese red might be the more likely species here.
Gansu pika	<i>Ochotona cansus</i>	A few seen at the Pallas's cat site in the scrubby riverine gullies and 3-4 again the next day at Huashixia.
Wooly hare	<i>Lepus oiostolus</i>	Three at the first stop on Koko Nor were our first. Thereafter seen in small numbers in suitable habitat (9 further dates).
Smith's shrew	<i>Chodsigoa smithii</i>	A shrew seen by Stefan high on the Kanda Shan in the snow may well have been this poorly-known species.
Chinese pipistrelle	<i>Hypsugo pulveratus</i>	Bats at Tangjiahe, fitted this species on both appearance and echo-location frequency.
Pallas's cat	<i>Felis manul</i>	The three well-grown kittens we spent the day with (down to 12-13 metres) will live long in the memory.
Tibetan wolf	<i>Canis (lupus) chanco</i>	We only recorded this species on the road across the Chang Tang en route to Budonquan. Sightings came at regular intervals through the day and we ended the day with a creditable nine individuals between us and some great encounters. Kiang packed into dense 'bait-balls' being a great indicator of their presence. A slightly below par showing by this iconic mammal this year.
Tibetan fox	<i>Vulpes ferrlata</i>	Frequently encountered in suitable high-altitude habitat infested with pikas (8 dates). A joy to watch.
Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	One just before dusk in the South Koko Nor range en route to Gong He. Small numbers encountered thereafter (eight dates – a good showing).
Red panda	<i>Ailurus fulgens</i>	One very obliging individual at Laba He on the first day was well-photographed. At least a further four individuals there but none were very obliging.
[Asian badger] Hog badger	<i>Meles leucurus</i> <i>Arctonyx collaris</i>	Impressive sett found in the desert west of Chaka. Just three seen on nocturnal excursions at Tangjiahe. A poor showing this year.
Masked palm civet	<i>Paguma larvata</i>	Frequently encountered at night in Tangjiahe but hard to see well. We did well though late on the last night.
Mountain weasel	<i>Mustela altaica</i>	One encountered at by Stefan and Phil on the Wenquan Pass walk. Another at Huashixia was seen by most if not all.
Steppe polecat	<i>Mustela eversmanni</i>	Michel and Francis ruined our day south of Yushu by seeing this species briefly.
Kiang	<i>Equus kiang</i>	Frequently encountered up on the plateau. Up to 250 daily on four dates.
Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>	Feeding sign throughout in Sichuan. Only Jesper saw any (at Tangjiahe).

Reeve's muntjac	<i>Muntiacus reevesi</i>	Only in Sichuan. Abundant at Tangjiahe. One at Laba He.
Tufted deer [Red deer]	<i>Elaphodus cephalophus</i> <i>Cervus elaphus</i>	A few during the day at Tangjiahe. Introduced and very tame individuals wandering around at Laba He were not identified to race but are reputed to have come from NE China.
Gansu red deer	<i>Cervus (elephus) kansuensis</i>	Just four kansuensis deer in the Dulan Mountains. These are likely to be split out somehow in future.
McNeil's deer	<i>Cervus macneilli</i>	We looked for and found eight mcneilli deer on our first day south of Yushu.
White-lipped deer	<i>Przewalskium albirostris</i>	Two fine stags on the way into Baixha. At least 59 en route to Qumalai, including some fine rutting stags. Four more stags distantly the next day.
Sambar Goitered gazelle	<i>Rusa unicolor</i> <i>Gazella subguttorsa</i>	Tangjiahe. Very few this year. Just 22 in the grasslands between the Qaidam Basin and Chaka.
Tibetan gazelle	<i>Procapra picticaudata</i>	Frequently encountered on the high plateau in both the flat valley bottoms and the mountains. Largest number on the Chang Tang day when we all got our best photos.
Przewalski's gazelle	<i>Procapra przewalskii</i>	A good total of 57 near Koko Nor on day 2. An endangered mammal and one of the trip highlights.
Wild yak	<i>Bos grunniens</i>	Good numbers this year but as always discerning genuine wild ones from their domestic cousins was difficult at long-range. We got excellent close views of some on the Chang Tang day and more in Wild Yak Valley (Yeniugou) the next day.
Golden takin	<i>Budorcas taxicolor</i>	Only in Sichuan. Amazingly easy to find at Tangjiahe. Close-up and often unasked-for encounters available around the hotel buildings too.
Chinese serow	<i>Capricornis milneedwardsii</i>	Only in Sichuan at Tangjiahe and difficult to find this year. We had one great albeit brief view from the bus one night. Otherwise glimpsed on night drives there.
Chinese goral	<i>Naemorhedus griseus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Often encountered when spotlighting at both sites visited and occasionally found during the day.
Argali	<i>Ovis ammon</i>	At least 50 including some very close males en route to Qumalai. A trip highlight. Also 16 in Wild Yak Valley (Yeniugou) a few days later.
Blue sheep	<i>Pseudois nayaur</i>	One in Gansu Gully was a surprise. A small herd the next day in Wenquan Pass. Thereafter noted in small numbers on days south of Yushu and in the Dulan Mountains.
Tibetan antelope	<i>Pantholops hodgsonii</i>	A total of over 400 on the day we crossed the Chang Tang.

## Systematic List Number 2      Birds

The systematic order is taken from the 'Birds of China' by Mackinnon and Phillips (2000), nomenclature and taxonomy invariably is not. Deviations are marked with a † and are totally justified!

Daurian partridge	<i>Perdix dauurica</i>	Small covey of ten at the dune stop at Koko Nor.
Tibetan partridge	<i>Perdix hodgsoniae</i>	Recorded on two days south of Yushu.
†Przewalski's partridge	<i>Alectoris magna</i>	Only six in the Dulan Mountains on our red deer hike.
Chinese bamboo partridge	<i>Bambusicola thoracica</i>	Jesper had a few in the morning at Dujiangyan.
Blood pheasant	<i>Ithaginus cruentus</i>	Six in the Baixha valley. Another small group (3) watched feeding in the Kanda Shan.
[Temminck's tragopan]	<i>Tragopan temminckii</i>	Heard only this year at Tangjiahe.
Szecheny's monal-partridge	<i>Tetraophasis szechenyii</i>	At least three groups located in the Kanda Shan.
†White eared-pheasant	<i>Crossoptilon crossoptilon</i>	Seen in reasonable numbers on all three days south of Yushu. A trip highlight for many of us.
Common pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>	Small numbers encountered around Xining and in the Qaidam Basin.
Golden pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus pictus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few around the Tangjiahe area, mostly heard only.
Lady Amherst's pheasant	<i>Chrysolophus amherstiae</i>	Occasional sightings for the leaders only at Laba He. The new road at the site has made finding this species rather more difficult.
Greylag goose	<i>Anser anser</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor.
Bar-headed goose	<i>Anser indicus</i>	A few on plateau wetlands.
Ruddy shelduck	<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	Frequently encountered on plateau wetlands.
Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor (60).
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Small numbers on just two dates on the plateau.
†Chinese spot-billed duck	<i>Anas zonorhyncha</i>	One on the plateau. Two on the river we stopped at en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Northern pintail	<i>Anas acuta</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor only this year.
Common teal	<i>Anas crecca</i>	Recorded at Koko Nor and a few other plateau wetlands. A single off the pond at Tangjiahe was a surprise.
Red-crested pochard	<i>Rhodonessa rufina</i>	Large numbers on the freshwater lagoon at Koko Nor only.
Ferruginous duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i>	Four at Koko Nor. Huge flock at Longbaotan as usual.
Tufted duck	<i>Aythya fuligula</i>	A few at Koko Nor.
Common pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	A few at Koko Nor.
Goosander	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	Noted on three dates on rivers and wetlands on the plateau.
Great spotted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus major</i>	Three at Chaka gulag. Two records in Sichuan.
Crimson-breasted woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus cathparius</i>	Only in Sichuan. Singles at Laba He and Tangjiahe (two dates).
Darjeeling woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus darjellensis</i>	A few at Laba He.
Grey-capped pygmy woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopus canicapillus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Speckled piculet	<i>Picumnus innominatus</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few at Tangjiahe.
[Black woodpecker]	<i>Dryocopus martius</i>	Single heard at the first Huzhu valley walk.

Grey-headed woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i>	Single heard on the Huzhu day. Small numbers at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Three singles in Qinghai.
Crested kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle lugubris</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two on the river en route to Tangjiahe and small numbers daily at that site.
Eurasian eagle owl	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	An excellently muscular fly-past in the Dulan Mountains – no wonder the pikas kept their heads down there!
Collared scops owl	<i>Otus bakkamoena</i>	We successfully chased one in the parkland near our hotel at Dujiangyan. Two others heard there.
[Northern boobook]	<i>Ninox japonica</i>	Heard only at Dujiangyan.
Little owl	<i>Athene noctua</i>	Just one bird noted on the Tibetan leg of the tour. Is this species in decline in Qinghai?
Rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	Scarce in towns in the lowlands.
Hill pigeon	<i>Columba rupestris</i>	Recorded on nine dates on the plateau. The very large flock (2000+) feeding in stubble near Yushu was notable.
Speckled wood pigeon	<i>Columba hodgsonii</i>	Big flock at Laba He one day.
Oriental turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia orinetalis</i>	Three records.
Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Noted in the lowlands on transit days.
Collared dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	Small numbers on two dates up on the plateau.
Black-necked crane	<i>Grus nigricollis</i>	A trip highlight. Heard at Koko Nor. Noted on four dates on the plateau (total of just 25).
Common coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Recorded on just two dates on the plateau.
Common moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	One at Koko Nor.
Tibetan sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes tibetanus</i>	Just 10 birds in Wild Yak Valley.
Pallas's sandgrouse	<i>Syrrhaptes paradoxus</i>	Perhaps as many as 70 at the site outside Chakha – on the ground but always more impressive in flight.
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	One in the woods at Dulan.
Solitary snipe	<i>Gallinago solitaria</i>	One at Wenquan and another on the river north of Yushu. A good showing.
Common snipe	<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	At least twenty at Koko Nor.
Ruff	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>	Small flock distantly at Koko Nor.
Spotted redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor only this year.
Common redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Just one (at Longbaotan) this year.
Greenshank	<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Four at Koko Nor, another along the river en route to Chengdu at Jiang You.
Green sandpiper	<i>Tringa ochropus</i>	Two north of Yushu.
Common sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Only in Sichuan. Two or three noted along the river at Jiang You en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Long-billed dowitcher	<i>Limnodromus scolopaceus</i>	A single migrant at Koko Nor was unexpected to say the least. Perhaps part of the small population breeding in N Siberia?
Ibisbill	<i>Ibidorhynchus struthersii</i>	Only encountered north of Yushu this year. At least five individuals there.
Northern lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor.
Long-billed plover	<i>Charadrius placidus</i>	One on the river at Jiang You on the last day of the tour.
Pallas's gull	<i>Larus ichthyaetus</i>	Small numbers on just five dates on the plateau.
Yellow-legged gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i>	Single on Day 5.

Brown-headed gull	<i>Larus brunnicephalus</i>	Occasionally encountered on plateau wetlands (five dates).
Black-headed gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	A single on one day on the plateau.
Common tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Single at Longbaotan (plateau wetland).
Whiskered tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>	Single at Koko Nor.
Lammergier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	Records on 11 days on the plateau. One of the highlights of the tour was the frequently excellent observations of this fantastic species.
Himalayan griffon vulture	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	Recorded daily on the plateau, often in large numbers.
Black vulture	<i>Aegypius monachus</i>	A few birds on four dates on the plateau.
Pallas's fish eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucoryphus</i>	Single immature bird at Longbaotan – a good find.
Hen harrier	<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Recorded on just one date on the plateau this year when at least six present at Koko Nor.
Crested goshawk	<i>Accipiter trivirgatus</i>	Two at Laba He.
Eurasian sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Scattered records (five dates on the plateau and at least two in Sichuan).
Northern goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	Two birds noted up on the plateau.
Common buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	Birds on the plateau leg of the tour were Himalayan buzzards, subsp. burmanicus, sometimes split. We also recorded single japonicus on Days 1 and 15. The few birds noted in Sichuan were japonicus.
Long-legged buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	One south through Wenquan Pass.
Upland buzzard	<i>Buteo hemilasius</i>	Large numbers daily on the plateau.
Steppe eagle	<i>Aquila nipalensis</i>	Small numbers noted on six days on the plateau, all migrating south.
Golden eagle	<i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	One or two birds on eight dates on the plateau.
Mountain hawk-eagle	<i>Spizaetus nipalensis</i>	One at Tangjiahe.
Common kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Scattered, almost daily, records throughout the Tibetan leg of our journey.
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	At least one on the plateau.
Saker	<i>Falco cherrug</i>	One of the delightful aspects of the Tibetan leg of the tour was the frequent encounters, often at close range, with this fantastic species.
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	One on the last day, plucking a small bird in flight over our lunch stop.
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	One south through Wenquan pass.
Little grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	At least four at Koko Nor this year. Three on the reservoir en route to Tangjiahe.
Great crested grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	Recorded in small numbers at Koko Nor and two other plateau wetlands.
Black-necked grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor.
Great cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor and another plateau wetland.
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Sichuan only – a few noted in transit.
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Only in Sichuan Basin, where reasonably common, even turning up in the middle of towns.

Chinese pond-heron	<i>Ardeola bacchus</i>	Two at Wenquan on the hot springs outfall. One along the river at Jiang You (Sichuan).
Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Small numbers at Koko Nor and Longbaotan on the plateau leg. A few noted in transit in Sichuan.
Black-crowned night-heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	One on the river at Wenquan. Sichuan – heard at Dujiangyan.
Long-tailed shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	A few in Sichuan.
Tibetan grey shrike	<i>Lanius (sphenocercus) giganteus</i>	Just one at Huashixia this year.
Chinese grey shrike	<i>Lanius sphenocercus</i>	One on the second day. Five singles on the plateau thereafter.
[Grey-backed shrike]	<i>Lanius tephronotus</i>	Heard south of Yushu.
Jay	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Small numbers in the woods on the first day (Huzhu). Recorded in Sichuan.
Red-billed blue magpie	<i>Urocissus erythrorhyncha</i>	Only in Sichuan. Frequently encountered at all the sites we visited.
Azure-winged magpie	<i>Cyanopica cyanus</i>	Huzhu to Xining. This species is spreading on the plateau (as more trees are planted) and we found birds at Chaka gulag this year. Some in transit around Xining and Chengdu.
Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i>	'Lowland' birds were of little interest to us but the Tibetan race <i>bottanensis</i> was quite different and was recorded on five dates.
†Henderson's ground-jay	<i>Podoces hendersoni</i>	A total of just two birds noted whilst crossing the Qaidam Basin this year.
Hume's groundpecker	<i>Pseudopodoces humilis</i>	This frequently encountered clown was the jewel in the crown of the plateau's avifauna. Now placed with the tits but maintained here for now!
Spotted nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at all sites visited.
Red-billed chough	<i>Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax</i>	Recorded on eleven dates on the plateau.
Alpine chough	<i>Pyrrhonorax graculus</i>	A small flock low down on the second day south of Yushu.
Daurian jackdaw	<i>Corvus dauuricus</i>	Only seen on the three days south of Yushu on the Tibetan leg of the tour where pleasingly numerous.
Large-billed crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchus</i>	Small numbers on the first two days, thereafter only noted low down south of Yushu and in Sichuan.
Collared crow	<i>Corvus torquatus</i>	At least two en route to Tangjiahe on the last day. One on the way back too.
Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	Only on the high plateau, where recorded daily.
Long-tailed minivet	<i>Pericrotus ethologus</i>	Just one seen at Laba He this year.
White-throated dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Recorded in small numbers on four dates around Yushu.
Brown dipper	<i>Cinclus pallasii</i>	Only in Sichuan. Common around Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Red-throated thrush	<i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	Occasional in small numbers on the plateau (four dates in total).
Black-throated thrush	<i>Turdus atrogularis</i>	One roadside bird on Day 5 was a surprise. Two further records on the plateau.

Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Only in Sichuan. One for Anita en route to Chengdu on the last day. A few in the park at Chengdu. The mandarinus race of blackbird.
Kessler's thrush	<i>Turdus kessleri</i>	Only recorded on the plateau on two dates this year and in very small numbers.
Chinese thrush	<i>Turdus mupinensis</i>	Single at Huzhu.
Scaly thrush	<i>Zoothera dauma</i>	A dead bird picked up outside Golmud during the 'big fall' event and another seen by Jesper at Chaka gulag three days later. Nice records.
Northern red-flanked bluetail	<i>Tarsiger cyanurus</i>	A few on the first day where of the race albocaeruleus. Also Tangjiahe.
Himalayan red-flanked bluetail	<i>Tarsiger rufilatus</i>	A few at Tangjiahe.
[Golden bush robin]	<i>Tarsiger chrysaeus</i>	Heard at Laba He.
[White-browed bush robin]	<i>Tarsiger indicus</i>	Heard at Laba He.
[Siberian rubythroat]	<i>Luscinia calliope</i>	Heard at Huzhu.
†Przewalski's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus alashanicus</i>	One in Dulan plantation and at least five at the Chaka gulag.
White-throated redstart	<i>Phoenicurus schisticeps</i>	Small numbers on the first day around Huzhu and thereafter on just one additional date on the plateau.
Daurian redstart	<i>Phoenicurus aureoreus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Good numbers at each site visited.
Hodgson's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus hodgsoni</i>	Obliging male on day 1 at Huzhu, plus three others there.
†Guldenstadt's redstart	<i>Phoenicurus erythrogaster</i>	Frequently encountered often in large concentrations on the plateau leg of the tour.
Blue-fronted redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>	Frequently encountered on the first day. Pair at Wenquan Pass.
White-capped redstart	<i>Chaimarornis leucocephalus</i>	A few in the Huzhu area on the first day and on one date south of Yushu. Common in Sichuan.
Plumbeous redstart	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosa</i>	Common along rivers and streams in Sichuan.
Rufous-gorgetted flycatcher	<i>Ficedula strophiiata</i>	Sichuan only. Small numbers at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Slaty-backed flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hodgsonii</i>	Single at Tangjiahe.
Ultramarine flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliaris</i>	Single at Tangjiahe.
Blue-and-white flycatcher	<i>Cyanoptila cyanomelana</i>	Two in the wood outside Golmud were a real surprise.
Siberian stonechat	<i>Saxicola maurus</i>	One south of Yushu and another in Sichuan.
Little forktail	<i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers noted at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
White-crowned forktail	<i>Enicurus leschenaultii</i>	Singel at Laba He.
Oriental magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	One in Sichuan.
Red-billed starling	<i>Spodiopsar sericeus</i>	Two at Chaka gulag were a surprise. One at Tangjiahe and small numbers en route to Chengdu on the last day.
White-cheeked starling	<i>Sturnus cineraceus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers en route to Chengdu on the last day.
Crested myna	<i>Acridotheres cristatellus</i>	Only in Sichuan – a few noted in transit in the lowlands.
Eurasian nuthatch	<i>Sitta europaea</i>	Only in Sichuan. Small numbers encountered in flocks all sites visited.

Chinese nuthatch	<i>Sitta villosa</i>	One of the highlights of the first day acclimatising was connecting with good numbers of these little beauties in the Huzhu area. Also small numbers at Baixha
Przewalsky's nuthatch	<i>Sitta przewalski</i>	Recorded at Huzhu and Baixha.
Wallcreeper	<i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	A total of four on three dates during the tour.
[Eurasian treecreeper]	<i>Certhia familiaris</i>	A few heard on the first day.
Hodgson's treecreeper	<i>Certhia hodgsoni</i>	One on the second day south of Yushu on the plateau leg. Another record at Laba He.
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	A few encountered on the first day. Small numbers in Sichuan.
Willow tit	<i>Parus montanus</i>	Common on the first day. Songar tit is now lumped with this species.
Sichuan tit	<i>Parus weigoldicus</i>	Noted on all two dates south of Yushu. A recent split.
White-browed tit	<i>Parus superciliosus</i>	Small numbers of this smart little bird on just two days on the plateau.
Rusty-breasted tit	<i>Parus davidi</i>	At least two encounters at Laba He.
Rufous-vented tit	<i>Parus rubidiventris</i>	A few on the first day and at Baixha.
Grey-crested tit	<i>Parus dichrous</i>	Two on the first day seen well, recorded on one further date on the plateau and small numbers at forest sites in Sichuan.
Grey tit	<i>Parus minor</i>	A few on the first day and at Dujiangyan and en route to Chengdu in Sichuan.
Green-backed tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Recorded in small numbers at both forest sites.
Black-throated tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen in urban area where we lunched en route to Dujiangyan.
Sooty tit	<i>Aegithalos fuliginosus</i>	Encountered by some of us on two dates at Tangjiahe.
Black-browed tit	<i>Aegithalos bonvaloti</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few flocks encountered at Laba He.
Yellow-browed tit	<i>Sylvioparus modestus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Just one encounter at Tangjiahe for Jesper.
Collared finchbill	<i>Spizixos semitorques</i>	Only in Sichuan. A few going over the pass outside Tangjiahe.
Light-vented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus sinensis</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Noted at Dujiangyan and in Chengdu.
†Tarim hill warbler	<i>Rhopophilus albosuperciliaris</i>	At least seven of this recently-split species in the Qaidam Basin.
[Spotted bush-warbler]	<i>Locustella thoracica</i>	Heard at Laba He.
Brownish-flanked bush-warbler	<i>Cettia fortipes</i>	One in a flock along the river at Tangjiahe.
Yellowish-bellied bush-warbler	<i>Cettia acanthizoides</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers at Laba He.
Grey-sided bush-warbler	<i>Cettia brunnifrons</i>	A few seen and heard at Laba He.
†Stolitzcka's tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoeile sophiae</i>	Widespread and frequently encountered on the plateau.
Crested tit-warbler	<i>Leptopoeile elegans</i>	A few glimpsed at Huzhu. Two of these gorgeous birds at Baixha (south of Yushu).
Ashy-throated warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	Small numbers in flocks at Laba He.
Pallas's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulus</i>	At least one at Chaka gulag. Three at Laba He.



Buff-barred warbler	<i>Phylloscopus pulcher</i>	Just one in Huzhu this year. A few at Baixha. Noted in small numbers at both sites visited in Sichuan.
Yellow-browed warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	One heard and glimpsed at Laba He.
†Alpine leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occisinensis</i>	A few south of Yushu. This race of Tickell's leaf warbler has been split by Clements.
Gansu leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus kansuensis</i>	Only a few remained at Huzhu this year and were elusive.
†Sichuan leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus forresti</i>	Small numbers at Baixha on the plateau leg. Small numbers almost daily in Sichuan. A recent split from pale-rumped leaf warbler <i>P. chloronotus</i> .
†[Chinese leaf warbler]	<i>Phylloscopus yunnanensis</i>	Heard at Laba He on one day.
Hume's warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	Two at Baixha.
Goldcrest	<i>Regulus regulus</i>	Huzhu and Baixha on the plateau leg.
Giant laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax maximus</i>	Seen well a number of times at Baixha and heard the next day in the Kanda Shan.
[Moustached laughingthrush]	<i>Garrulax cineraceus</i>	Heard at the pass above Tangjiahe.
Barred laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax lunulatus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers at Laba He.
[Hwamei]	<i>Garrulax canorus</i>	Heard around Tangjiahe.
Elliott's laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax ellioti</i>	Vocal but not seen on the first day. Thereafter frequently encountered in lowland areas, eg south of Yushu and in Sichuan.
Black-faced laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax affinis</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen well at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
[Red-winged laughingthrush]	<i>Garrulax formosus</i>	Heard at Laba He.
Streak-breasted scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Occasionally encountered at Tangjiahe.
Black-streaked scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus gravivox</i>	Three one day at Tangjiahe.
Chinese babax	<i>Babax lanceolatus</i>	Jesper had a small number high in Tangjiahe.
Kozlov's babax	<i>Babax koslowi</i>	A few birds seen on the first day south of Yushu. Heard later in the Kanda Shan.
[Pygmy cupwing]	<i>Pnoepyga pusilla</i>	Heard at Tangjiahe.
Rufous-capped babbler	<i>Stachyris ruficeps</i>	Just two at Tangjiahe.
Red-billed leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Frequently encountered at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Blue-winged minla	<i>Minla cyanoptera</i>	One for Jesper at Dujiangyan in the morning.
Golden-breasted fulvetta	<i>Lioparus chrysotis</i>	One in a rare flock at Tangjiahe.
Chinese fulvetta	<i>Alcippe striaticollis</i>	Perhaps just one bird at Baixha (south of Yushu).
Grey-hooded fulvetta	<i>Alcippe cinereiceps</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small numbers daily at Laba He and Tangjiahe. Formerly part of the streak-throated fulvetta complex.
David's fulvetta	<i>Alcippe davidi</i>	Laba He.
White-collared yuhina	<i>Yuhina diademata</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. Small flocks of this species encountered occasionally at Laba He.
Bearded parrotbill	<i>Panurus biarmicus</i>	Small flock seen very well in the Qaidam Basin.
Great parrotbill	<i>Conostoma oemodium</i>	Only in Sichuan. Pair seen well at Laba He.
[Fulvous parrotbill]	<i>Paradoxornis fulvifrons</i>	Heard at Laba He.

Vinous-throated parrotbill	<i>Paradoxornis webbianus</i>	Only in Sichuan. Seen on the outskirts of Dujiangyan by Jesper only.
Tibetan lark	<i>Melanocorypha maxima</i>	Seen well first in the South Koko Nor range and the desert at Chaka and heard and seen elsewhere on the plateau in wetter areas.
[Hume's short-toed lark]	<i>Calandrella acutirostris</i>	Heard on Day 4.
Asian short-toed lark	<i>Calandrella cheleensis</i>	Noted in the Qaidam Basin and the subsequent two days.
Oriental skylark	<i>Alauda gulgula</i>	Often common in the lower-lying areas of the plateau.
Horned lark	<i>Eremophila alpestris</i>	Frequently encountered often in good numbers on the plateau.
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Eric had one on Day 5. Small numbers in Qing Xie whilst we waited for the puncture to be repaired.
Tree sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	Almost ubiquitous.
Rock sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i>	Noted on five days on the plateau.
Henri's snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla henrici</i>	First seen on the Er La pass (9). Elsewhere recorded on just three other days on the plateau.
Tibetan snowfinch	<i>Montifringilla adamsi</i>	Seen on the plateau on just two dates and in small numbers.
White-rumped snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda taczanowski</i>	A bruiser! Frequently encountered in the vicinity of black-lipped pika colonies on the plateau.
Père David's snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda davidiana</i>	Two or three briefly at the spring in the Chaka desert.
Rufous-necked snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda ruficollis</i>	Only on the higher plateau where recorded, often in large flocks, on ten dates.
Blanford's snowfinch	<i>Pyrgilauda blanfordi</i>	Just two in the desert outside Chaka.
White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Good numbers this year of late birds lingering on the plateau (9 dates). Frequently encountered in Sichuan on the extension.
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Small numbers noted in Sichuan in suitable habitat.
Citrine wagtail	<i>Motacilla citreola</i>	At least four on the hot springs at Wenquan. Singles or twos on four further dates on the plateau.
Rosy pipit	<i>Anthus roseatus</i>	Three at Laba He briefly.
Olive-backed pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	A few birds at Huzhu and the migrant hotspot outside Golmud. Also at Tangjiahe (1).
Water pipit	<i>Anthus spinoletta</i>	Recorded on the last four days on the plateau.
Robin accentor	<i>Prunella rubeculoides</i>	Frequently encountered in suitable habitat on the plateau leg of the tour (ten dates).
Rufous-breasted accentor	<i>Prunella strophiaata</i>	Small numbers on two dates on the plateau leg of the tour.
Brown accentor	<i>Prunella fulvescens</i>	Small numbers on eight dates on the plateau leg of the tour.
Maroon-backed accentor	<i>Prunella immaculata</i>	A flock of five or so encountered at Laba He were a trip highlight for some.
Brandt's mountain finch	<i>Leucosticte brandti</i>	Nine at Wenquan Pass.
Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	One outside Golmud and a large flock of 40+ at Tangjiahe.
Twite	<i>Carduelis flavirostris</i>	Recorded on nine dates on the plateau leg of the tour.
Brambling	<i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	Tow in the woods around Golmud.

Mongolian finch	<i>Bucanetes mongolicus</i>	A flock of 21 at Yeniugou. Five or six dropped in to drink at the spring in the desert around Chaka.
†Chinese beautiful rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus davidianus</i>	One at the first stop on the first day (Huzhu). Recorded on two further dates but most struggled to see this species well this year.
Pink-rumped rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus eos</i>	Recorded in small numbers on all three dates south of Yushu.
Vinaceous rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus vinaceus</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few at Tangjiahe.
Dark-breasted rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus nipalensis</i>	One at Laba He for some.
†Chinese white-browed rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus dubius</i>	Small numbers on the first day (Huzhu), on two dates on the plateau and finally in the Dulan Mountains.
†Eastern great rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilloides</i>	Noted on three dates in high altitude scrub and woodland.
†Caucasian great rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rubicilla</i>	Recorded on two dates on the plateau in arid areas.
Roborovski's rosefinch	<i>Kozlowia roborowskii</i>	One at Wenquan pass for Jesper only.
†Przewalski's pinktail	<i>Urocynchramus pylzowi</i>	Two in the dunes at Koko Nor were a big surprise. At least five at Jesper's site for this fantastic species on the plateau near Huashixia.
Grey-headed bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula erythaca</i>	Two at Huzhu. Heard at Baixha. Occasional in Sichuan.
Red crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	Two for Lesley only at Baixha.
Chinese grosbeak	<i>Eophonia migratoria</i>	Recorded from the bus en route to Tangjiahe.
White-winged grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas carnipes</i>	Seen at Baixha and heard in the Dulan Mountains.
Slaty bunting	<i>Latoucheornis siemsseni</i>	Only seen in Sichuan. A few great sightings at Laba He and Tangjiahe.
Pine bunting	<i>Emberiza leucocephalos</i>	A single female on the road to Qumalai.
Godlewski's bunting	<i>Emberiza godlewski</i>	Two on the first day. Thereafter scattered records on the plateau (five dates).
Little bunting	<i>Emberiza pusilla</i>	Small numbers at Huashixia and the migrant hotspot outside Golmud. A few in Sichuan.
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	One seen poorly at Koko Nor. Single in the Qaidam Basin. One of the thick-billed races.